

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is responsible for management of public land and its resources based on the principle of multiple-use and sustained health, diversity, and productivity for present and future generations. The land use plan provides management direction, which is used to determine appropriate uses and allocate resources, develop strategies to manage and protect resources, and establish systems to monitor and evaluate the status of resources and effectiveness of management decisions over time. The Las Cruces District Office of the BLM has prepared the *TriCounty Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (TriCounty Draft RMP/EIS)* to analyze alternative management approaches and their corresponding impacts, which provide a framework for managing public land and for allocating resources on the BLM-administered land in Sierra, Otero, and Doña Ana counties in New Mexico.

The Las Cruces District Office manages public land in Sierra, Otero, Doña Ana, Hidalgo, Luna, and Grant counties in southern New Mexico. The area identified for this planning effort includes Sierra, Otero, and Doña Ana counties. The three-county area varies greatly in resource diversity, production, and potential due to differences in elevation, climate, soils, and a topography that exhibits influences from the Chihuahuan desert, Mexican Highlands, southern Rocky Mountains, and Mogollon Plateau Physiographic Regions. The “*Planning Area*” referred to in this document includes all land within Sierra, Otero, and Doña Ana counties. The term “*Decision Area*” applies to all public land and its resources that are managed by the BLM, including Federal mineral estate within the three counties.

Lands administered by the BLM, whether surface or subsurface estate, are referred to in this document as BLM-administered land or public land.

The *TriCounty Planning Area* of Sierra, Otero, and Doña Ana counties consist of about 9.3 million acres which includes all Federal, State trust, private and tribal lands in the three counties.

Within the *Planning Area* is the *Decision Area* which includes approximately 2.82 million surface acres (about 33 percent of the total acres) and 3.98 million acres of Federal mineral estate. Federal mineral estate includes unified surface and subsurface (mineral) estate and subsurface beneath other surface ownership or administration (split estate) administered by the BLM.

The BLM Las Cruces District Office manages a number of special resource protection management areas including 13 areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs); two research natural areas; 10 wilderness study areas (WSAs); one National Natural Landmark (NNL); one Backcountry Byway; one National Historic Trail and one National Monument. The Prehistoric Trackways National Monument, designated through the Omnibus Public Lands Act of 2009, will have a separate stand-alone RMP so its management is not addressed in this RMP/EIS.

The BLM-administered surface and subsurface estate in Sierra and Otero counties is currently managed according to direction provided by the *1986 White Sands RMP*, and public surface and subsurface estate in Doña Ana County is managed under the *1993 Mimbres RMP*. The Las Cruces District Office has determined that the *White Sands RMP* needs to be revised and updated to provide a more comprehensive framework for management guidance in the two counties. The *Mimbres RMP* needs to be amended to address issues associated with the growth in Doña Ana County and nearby El Paso, Texas, that have affected changes in demographic characteristics as well as increased use of public land. The goals and management decisions under the *Mimbres* and *White Sands* RMPs no longer adequately address the demographics or resource conditions of the region, nor are they compatible with policies changes that

have occurred over the years. As a result, the BLM Las Cruces District Office has prepared the *TriCounty Draft RMP/EIS* to analyze BLM's management of public land in the *Planning Area*, to identify alternative management approaches for public land, and to analyze the associated impacts of each alternative on the human and natural environment. The EIS prepared with the RMP is intended to satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA (Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations Sections 1500 through 1508), and other associated regulations.

The planning process to revise the RMP was initiated on January 28, 2005, with the public scoping phase, which included public meetings, newspaper articles, workshops, and informal presentations to interested groups as well as other activities to identify management concerns. The results of the scoping process are summarized in the *TriCounty RMP/EIS Scoping Report* (June 2005) which is available at the Las Cruces District Office or online at http://www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/fo/Las_Cruces_District_Office/TriCounty_rmp.html. Issues identified during scoping and considered throughout the planning process were related to transportation, access, recreational opportunities, special designations, and renewable energy.

An Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) was prepared in June 2006 to compile baseline resource data and trends and to analyze the potential for changes to the management of BLM's *Decision Area*. Alternative management plans that are evaluated in the *TriCounty Draft RMP/EIS* were derived from the Management Opportunities section of the AMS. The alternatives were further refined based on the goals and objectives identified for each resource and resource use, and the issues that were identified in pre-planning and public scoping processes.

Management alternatives for the *TriCounty Draft RMP/EIS* are discussed in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 provides a description of the existing environment, and Chapter 4 includes an analysis of the potential impacts that would result from the changes to the existing environment as a result of implementing each alternative. Cumulative impacts that consider past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions are analyzed at the end of Chapter 4. Chapter 5 contains a brief summary of the public outreach that was conducted during the preparation of the Draft RMP.

ALTERNATIVES

BLM has considered four management alternatives in the RMP/EIS: a no action alternative and three action alternatives briefly described as follows:

- **Alternative A** is the No Action Alternative. This does not mean "no management," but means that management direction would continue according to decisions in the *White Sands RMP* and *Mimbres RMP*. Those decisions would continue to be implemented, and no changes or new decisions would be made.
- **Alternative B** emphasizes conservation and preservation of resources and places the most restrictions on resource use. With this alternative, the BLM would manage and conserve resources for long-term use rather than using them primarily for short-term gain, while still providing for multiple-uses.

- **Alternative C (Preferred Alternative).** The BLM's preferred alternative at the time of the *Draft RMP/EIS* aims to find a balance between long-term conservation and the mandate to provide for multiple-use. Measures to protect sensitive resources would be implemented, but they would be less restrictive than under Alternative B.
- **Alternative D** emphasizes resource use, access, and production but still provides for resource protection only to the point necessary to meet regulatory or legislative requirements. Long-term preservation and use of resources on public land may not be possible under this alternative.

A major factor within each alternative is the determination of special designations and their associated management prescriptions. Special designations that are addressed in the alternatives include ACECs, WSAs, an NNL, and national historic trails. The number, the size, and the management prescriptions for ACECs vary across the alternatives. In addition, proposed management decisions within each alternative typically address off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, rights-of-way; minerals management; and renewable energy projects. Management prescriptions for existing WSAs, the NNL, and the National Historic Trail are carried forward from previous legislation, policy or land use plans.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Documentation of the existing condition of resources, resource uses, and other features of the *Planning Area* are discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 3 is organized by sections corresponding to the following resources and resource uses:

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| • Special Designations | • Visual Resources |
| • Lands With Wilderness Characteristics | • Fire and Fuels Management |
| • Air Resources | • Livestock Grazing |
| • Soil Resources | • Comprehensive Trails And Travel Management |
| • Water and Watershed Resources | • Recreation And Visitor Services |
| • Geology | • Lands and Realty |
| • Vegetation | • Renewable Energy |
| • Fish and Wildlife Habitat | • Minerals |
| • Special Status Species | • Abandoned Mine Lands |
| • Cultural Resources | • Socioeconomic Conditions |
| • Paleontology | • Environmental Justice |

Special Designations

Special designations are areas that the BLM has set aside for conservation purposes. Many of these areas have been assigned protective management prescriptions that limit surface disturbing activities. Special designations include ACECs, WSAs, backcountry byways, National Historical Trails, National Scenic Trails, Wild and Scenic Rivers, natural conservation areas, and national monuments. The *Planning Area* includes 9 WSAs, 13 ACECs, the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail, and the Lake Valley Backcountry Byway. Three historic trails pass through public land in the *TriCounty Planning Area*: the Mormon Battalion Trail, the Butterfield Overland Trail, and El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro. El Camino Real is a designated National Historic Trail that runs north and south through Doña Ana and Sierra Counties. Historically the trail connected Mexico City with northern New Mexico. The 9 WSAs are located in areas with wilderness characteristics totaling approximately 261,793 acres. Certain surface disturbing activities are allowed in WSAs; however, management decisions are geared toward limiting surface disturbance and maintaining existing wilderness characteristics. Wilderness

inventories were completed for the *Planning Area* in 1980. Additional inventories have been conducted and WSAs designated on land acquired since 1980.

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

Section 201 of FLPMA requires the BLM to maintain on a continuing basis an inventory of all public land and its resources and other values, which includes wilderness characteristics. In accordance with policy outlined in Instruction Memorandum 2011-154 (*Requirement to Conduct and Maintain Inventory Information for Wilderness Characteristics and to Consider Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in Land Use Plans*), this RMP addresses the wilderness characteristics of lands in the *Decision Area*. Where lands are found to contain wilderness character, the BLM considers a full range of alternatives for such lands. This RMP will analyze the effects of (1) plan alternatives on lands with wilderness characteristics and (2) management of lands with wilderness characteristics on other resources and resource uses.

The Las Cruces District Office determined that four areas, Nutt Grasslands, Bar Canyon, Peña Blanca South and Peña Blanca North, totaling approximately 11,494 acres in the *Decision Area* contain wilderness characteristics.

Air Resources

Air quality in the *Planning Area* involves ambient concentrations of criteria air pollutants, levels of visibility, and the presence of permitted and nonpermitted air pollutant sources. The major source of air pollution in the *Planning Area* is particulate emissions from road dust (EPA 2002). Significant PM₁₀ emissions also occur during naturally occurring high wind events (dust storms) (NMED 2006). Criteria pollutants must meet the New Mexico Ambient Air Quality Standards and the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Motorized vehicles represent the largest single air pollutant source category in the *Planning Area* and include emissions of NO₂, CO, and PM₁₀.

Soil Resources

Three broad categories of soils are found in the *Planning Area*: (1) very shallow to deep, well-drained sandy loams with small rock fragments found on mesas, hills, mountains, ridges, slopes, and upland plains; (2) clay loams ranging from deep, well-drained, and very stony material to very fine, sandy, and silty loams found on fan terraces, bajadas, and swales; and (3) deep, poor- to well-drained clay loams to loamy, fine sands in the floodplains of the Rio Grande Basin.

Water and Watershed Resources

The New Mexico Office of the State Engineer, as delineated by statute and judicial decision, has divided the state into declared groundwater basins to assess and adjudicate water resources. The *Planning Area* contains important surface water resources, including the Rio Grande, Elephant Butte, and Caballo reservoirs as well as Tularosa Creek and Percha Creek. Surface water on public land maintains existing riparian vegetation, provides water for wildlife and livestock, provides recreational opportunities, and recharges aquifers.

Vegetation

Vegetation in the *Planning Area* is grouped into five land cover categories based on the dominant natural vegetation in a location. These categories are: (1) forest-woodland, (2) grassland herbaceous, (3) shrub-scrub, (4) barren, and (5) developed and agricultural.

Forest and woodland cover types are limited to places with adequate soil moisture, and, in the *Planning Area*, typically occur at elevations above 5,000 feet. Shrub-scrub areas are commonly associated with a less moist environment and include herbaceous grass or forb understories. In parts of the *Planning Area*, degradation of the grassland-herbaceous cover types has increased shrub-scrub and shrubland cover area. This cover type typically appears as scattered trees or shrubs, although some areas may exhibit small patches of dense vegetation. Barren and sparsely vegetated cover types have a small amount of plant cover, and soil development is limited.

Woodland vegetation cover types within the *Planning Area* occur primarily in Otero County and the higher elevations in Sierra and Doña Ana counties. The direction for the management of woodlands is determined by the management of vegetation, wildlife, or fire and fuels that restoring ecological health.

According to New Mexico law, a “*noxious weed*” is any species of plant that is liable to be damaging or destructive and difficult to control or eradicate. Common locations for noxious weed infestations in the *Planning Area* include roadsides and areas that are highly disturbed or degraded.

Fish and Wildlife Habitat

The BLM is responsible for managing fish and wildlife habitats in the *Planning Area*, while State and Federal wildlife management agencies are responsible for managing fish and wildlife species and populations. Nineteen different standard habitat sites (SHSs) occur in the *Planning Area*. Most of these are fairly well-represented in all three counties. The fauna in the *TriCounty Planning Area* includes a diversity of game and nongame wildlife species, as well as migratory birds. Land use patterns in the *Planning Area* have influenced wildlife species distribution and habitat conditions. Loss or degradation of habitat and habitat fragmentation are the major factors affecting habitat quality and quantity. Actions contributing to degradation and fragmentation of habitat and wildlife corridors include road construction, oil and gas exploration and development, OHV use, renewable energy development including transmission lines and corridors, and almost any other changes in land use.

Special Status Species

Special status species include plants and animals that are listed as Endangered, Threatened, proposed for listing, or species of concern by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), State of New Mexico, or the BLM. Within the *TriCounty Planning Area*, 10 species are protected under the ESA including 8 endangered species and 2 threatened species. There is one candidate species for listing under ESA in the *Planning Area*. Approximately 78 special status animal species and 85 special status plant species potentially occur in the *Planning Area*.

Cultural Resources

Cultural resources include any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object considered important to a culture, subculture, or community for scientific, traditional, religious, or other purposes. Cultural resources also include archeological resources. The BLM's cultural resources program has recorded 380 archeological and historical sites in Sierra and Otero counties and 3,838 archeological and historical sites in Doña Ana County.

Paleontology

Paleontological resources include the bones, teeth, bodily remains, traces, or imprints of plants and animals preserved in the earth through geologic time. Paleontological resources can include related geological information such as rock types. The highest potential for significant fossil finds and geological formations in Otero County occur in the southern Tularosa Valley and in portions of the Sacramento and Capitan mountains. Rocks of the early Paleozoic crop out along escarpments of the San Andres, Organ, and other mountains in the *Planning Area*.

Visual Resources

Visual resources are natural and manmade physical features that give a landscape its character and value. Results of the 2010 Visual Resource Inventory Class Ratings are as follows:

- Visual Resource Inventory Class I – 0 acres
- Visual Resource Inventory Class II – 706,111 acres
- Visual Resource Inventory Class III – 1,028,709 acres
- Visual Resource Inventory Class IV – 1,085,332 acres

Fire and Fuels Management

BLM managers recognize fire as a natural disturbance in healthy ecosystems. The BLM managers use fire to restore the existing condition and character of the landscape and to assist in meeting other resource management goals and objectives. Fire Regime Condition Classes integrate the concept of historical fire regimes and use them as a qualitative measure against which current conditions are compared.

Livestock Grazing

Ranchers are authorized to use public land to support livestock grazing operations in conjunction with a BLM authorized grazing permit on a grazing allotment. There are 300 grazing allotments within the *Planning Area*. Grazing allotments can include Federal, State trust, and private lands. Guidance for livestock grazing on public land in the *Planning Area* is found in *White Sands RMP*, the *Mimbres RMP*, and the *New Mexico Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management* (BLM 2001). These guidelines describe the desired approach to changing grazing management when it is determined that livestock grazing is preventing public land from meeting the standards.

Comprehensive Trails and Travel Management

Road networks within the *Planning Area* include a series of Federal and State highways, county roads, BLM-maintained roads, primitive roads, and trails. All public land must be identified as open, closed, or limited to motorized vehicle use. These designations establish guidelines and limitations to OHV use. The majority of public land in Sierra and Otero counties is currently managed as open to OHV use.

Recreation and Visitor Services

The *TriCounty Planning Area* provides many public recreational opportunities in diverse natural settings. These opportunities occur on lands managed by the BLM as well as the US Forest Service, the National Park Service, the Mescalero Apache Tribe, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, New Mexico State Parks, New Mexico State Land Office, counties, and cities. Recreation in the *Planning Area* includes sightseeing, hiking, fishing, boating, wildlife viewing, scenic driving, hunting, horseback riding, caving, mountain biking, picnicking, OHV use, and camping.

Lands and Realty

The 1993 *Mimbres RMP* and the 1986 *White Sands RMP* designated specific land for retention and disposal in order to maintain land of value for certain resources and resource uses and to make land easier to manage. Retention areas include concentrated blocks of public land, and smaller parcels of higher resource values. Disposal areas typically consist of tracts of land that are difficult and uneconomical to manage, and parcels that could provide for expansion of communities and economic development. Only minor land tenure adjustments have been implemented in the *Planning Area* since adoption of the existing RMPs.

The BLM Las Cruces District Office manages rights-of-way through a system of designated corridors, right-of-way exclusions, and avoidance areas. Utility corridors have not been established for public land within Sierra and Otero counties.

Renewable Energy

The *Planning Area* has high potential for solar energy development and moderate potential for wind energy development. The Las Cruces District Office has received several applications for renewable energy projects but none have been approved or process.

Minerals

Three classifications of mineral estate are found on public land in the *Planning Area*: locatable (metallic and nonmetallic minerals), leasable (coal, geothermal, oil and gas, other solid leasables), and mineral material (sand, gravel, aggregate or other building stone). The BLM is responsible for managing approximately 4 million acres of Federal mineral estate within the *Planning Area*, which includes subsurface minerals underlying land that is managed by private, State, and other Federal agencies.

Locatable Minerals

Locatable minerals are minerals that can be prospected and mined under the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended. They are sometimes referred to as “hardrock” minerals and consist of both metallic and nonmetallic minerals such as gold, silver, copper, lead, barite, and a host of others. The *Decision Area* has several locatable mineral mining districts with significant mineral deposits.

Leasable Minerals

Opportunities for oil and gas development are limited in the *Planning Area*. Exploratory wells have been drilled, and there have been shows of oil and gas reported in all three counties; however, there has been no economic production to date. Consequently, the *Planning Area* is considered to have low to moderate potential for oil and gas production.

Mineral Materials

Mineral materials include sand, gravel, stone, pumice, pumicite, cinders, and ordinary clay. Sand, gravel, aggregate, limestone, cinders, and building stone are the most common salable minerals. There are several inactive or intermittently operated aggregate pits in the *Planning Area*, with the most activity occurring in Doña Ana County. The most common mineral materials in all counties include sand, gravel, and stone.

Socioeconomic Conditions

Social conditions, economic conditions, health and safety, and Tribal treaty rights are all considered as part of the socioeconomic conditions. Sierra and Otero counties’ populations are generally rural with large proportions of land historically used for agriculture and ranching. Doña Ana County is the most populated county in the *Planning Area*, and also has the greatest projected population growth (U.S. Census Bureau 2010).

Government and government services currently provide the largest share of employment in the *Planning Area* (ranging approximately from 18 percent in Sierra County, 36 percent in Otero County, and 24 percent in Doña Ana County) and statewide (19 percent).

Environmental Justice

Federal agencies are required to identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations in accordance with NEPA, Executive Order 12898: Environmental Justice, and other applicable laws and regulations. The majority of New Mexico’s population (54 percent) is part of a minority group. Doña Ana County and the Mescalero Apache Nation exceeded the State of New Mexico’s minority population proportion. The *Planning Area* exceeded the State of New Mexico’s low-income population rate of 18 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). The only geographic area that did not exceed the statewide poverty rate was the City of Alamogordo.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The predicted consequences, or potential effects, on the environment that would result from the implementation of the alternative management strategies are identified in the *TriCounty RMP/EIS*. An impact, or effect, is defined as a modification to the environment, as it presently exists, that is brought about by an outside action. Impacts may differ in significance from no change or an only slightly noticeable change to a full modification or elimination of the environmental condition. The following resource sections summarize the results from the impact analysis for each alternative.

Land Use Allocations

Table S-1 shows a summary of the land use allocations by acres by alternative.

Alternative A

This alternative represents the No Action Alternative, or continuation of the existing management direction in accordance with the management decisions outlined in the *1986 White Sands RMP* for Sierra and Otero counties and the *1993 Mimbres RMP* for Doña Ana County. Under Alternative A, resources and use would continue to be managed as under existing management direction, and current management strategies would remain the same. This alternative represents the baseline to which the action alternatives (Alternatives B, C, and D) are compared.

Alternative B

Under Alternative B, management actions would reduce or restrict surface-disturbing activities, closing areas to vehicle use, limiting vehicle use to existing or designated routes in 99 percent of the *Decision Area*. Alternative B would close or defer in the short-term, fluid mineral leasing, and increase the areas of avoidance and exclusion for rights-of-way including siting renewable energy projects. These management actions would reduce surface disturbance, soil erosion, vegetation loss, and increase control of noxious weeds. The potential for maintaining and improving wildlife habitat would be greatest under Alternative B because commodity use or development would occur on fewer acres. The potential for maintaining and improving lands with wilderness characteristics would be greatest under Alternative B. The management of public land within Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) and Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMAs), 122,000 acres, have the potential to increase visitor use due to specific designations of roads and trails and the presence of developed facilities. Solar energy development would be confined to the Afton Solar Energy Zone (SEZ) where up to 30,000 acres could be used for installation of solar collectors.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative)

Vehicle use on 99 percent of the *Decision Area* would be limited to existing or designated routes. Approximately 42,000 acres would be managed as open to OHV use and 20,000 acres would be closed. This would reduce potential surface disturbance and damage to vegetation, cultural resources, and wildlife habitat compared to Alternative A and would be similar to impacts under Alternative B.

Under Alternative C, approximately 304,000 acres would be designated and managed as ACECs, which would result in impacts similar to Alternative B but on less acreage. Reducing the number of acres set aside as ACECs leaves more acres open for surface disturbance and could lead to increased soil erosion and potential vegetation and wildlife habitat damage outside the ACEC.

The acres allocated and managed as lands with wilderness characteristics would be approximately 803 acres, less than under Alternative B. Reducing the number of acres managed to protect lands with wilderness characteristics leaves more acres open for surface disturbance and impacts to wilderness characteristics.

The acres allocated and managed as SRMAs and ERMAAs would be approximately 151,000 acres, greater than under Alternative B and impacts would be the same but for a larger area.

Under Alternative C, renewable energy actions and impacts would be the similar as described under Alternative B, but solar energy projects would be considered outside of the Afton SEZ after appropriate NEPA analysis.

Alternative D

Alternative D is primarily oriented toward accommodating more extensive and diverse resource uses in the *Decision Area*. Management actions taken to meet public land health standards in areas that are not currently achieving them would reduce soil erosion as well as vegetation and wildlife habitat damage. Acres open and closed to OHV use under this alternative would be similar as under Alternative C. Bar Canyon would be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics under this alternative.

Under Alternative D, 194,000 acres would be managed as SRMAs and ERMAAs, which is more than under Alternatives B and C. Concentrating recreational activities in these areas could indirectly protect resources outside these areas. However, SRMAs tend to attract more users and, depending upon the type of recreational activity and the amount of use, this would more heavily impact soil, vegetation, and wildlife habitat resources in these areas.

Renewable energy actions and impacts would be the same as described under Alternative C; however, a greater area could be potentially available for wind energy developments because less acreage would be classed as avoidance and exclusion areas under Alternative D.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

The *TriCounty RMP/EIS* is being completed in consultation with other Federal agencies; State, county, Tribal, and local governments; and the public. Consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act has been initiated with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and a Biological Assessment will be completed prior to BLM publishing the Proposed RMP and Final EIS. The NMDGF, State Historic Preservation Office, several tribes (White Mountain Apache Tribe, Mescalero Apache Tribe, Fort Sill Apache Tribe, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, Isleta Pueblo, Hopi Tribe, Navajo Nation, Kiowa Tribe, Comanche Indian Tribe, Laguna Pueblo, Acoma Pueblo, and Tesuque Pueblo), and government officials have been contacted and invited to participate in the RMP/EIS planning process. The City of Las Cruces; Sierra, Otero and Doña Ana counties; NMDGF; New Mexico Department of Agriculture, U.S. Army Ft. Bliss, and U.S Army White Sands Missile Range accepted the invitation and are participating in this effort as cooperating agencies, with the BLM acting as the lead agency.

In 2003, the BLM initiated public involvement in the RMP process through informal community meetings then proceeded in subsequent years with formal scoping meetings in 2005, planning bulletins and newsletters, and information on the BLM websites. Despite the protracted RMP schedule, the BLM has continued to accept public input on the document.

A notice of the availability of the Draft *TriCounty RMPs* and EIS will be sent to individuals, groups, agencies, and businesses on the Las Cruces District mailing list for this project when it is completed. The complete draft document will also be posted on the Las Cruces District Office website at that time.

TABLE S-1 SUMMARY COMPARISON OF LAND USE ALLOCATIONS BY ALTERNATIVE				
LAND USE	Acres ¹			
	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
Special Designations				
WSAs (number, acres)	10 261,793	10 261,793	10 261,793	10 261,793
ACECs (number, acres)				
Existing	13 89,723	13 91,477	12 87,731	12 85,977
Proposed	0 0	16 425,997	11 216,311	0 0
Total ACECs	13 89,723	29 517,774	23 304,042	12 85,977
Kilbourne Hole NL (number, acres)	1 5,500	1 5,500	1 5,500	1 5,500
Wild & Scenic River Suitability (miles)	0	3.5	0	1.4
Lands with Wilderness Characteristics				
LWCs (number, acres)	0 0	4 11,917	3 803	1 423
Vegetation				
Vegetation allocation changes as a result of grassland restoration treatments.	No allocation priorities.	Reserved for watershed function and wildlife.	Reserved to meet the needs of watershed function. Excess allocated to wildlife and livestock, with wildlife receiving priority.	Allocated to wildlife and livestock with neither having priority.
Fish and Wildlife Habitat				
Habitat Management Plans (number, acres)	9 1,188,349	4 1,416,965	4 1,416,729	4 1,416,729
Visual Resource Management				
Class I	38,521	343,253	271,406	265,526
Class II	578,348	893,669	638,331	689,513
Class III	840,655	806,869	809,938	810,179
Class IV	1,375,138	789,420	1,113,396	1,066,866

TABLE S-1 SUMMARY COMPARISON OF LAND USE ALLOCATIONS BY ALTERNATIVE				
LAND USE	Acres ¹			
	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
Livestock Grazing				
Area Closed To Grazing	2,049 acres of sensitive resources (wildlife and cultural)	Discontinue the authorization of livestock grazing in allotments, in whole or in part, with unmanageable conflicts. 17,602 acres of allotments that have no grazing authorization or with conflicts would be closed conflicts.	Discontinue the authorization of livestock grazing in allotments, in whole or in part, with unmanageable conflicts only after (1) a land health assessment/ evaluation, (2) a determination , and (3) a decision to reallocate the lands to a public purpose that precludes livestock grazing. 17,602 acres of allotments that have no grazing authorization or with conflicts would be closed.	1,156 acres of sensitive resources (wildlife and cultural)
Livestock Grazing Adjustments	Changes made on an as needed basis, case-by-case, based on monitoring.	25% reduction of AUMs on areas with limited restoration potential (950,000).	Changes to grazing made in priority watersheds based on monitoring of vegetation, soils, hydrology, and other variables associated with healthy ecological systems	Changes made on an as needed basis, case-by-case, based on monitoring.
Comprehensive Trails and Travel Management				
Open to OHV use	1,635,694	38,966	41,908	41,908
Limited to Existing Routes	878,636	2,003,188	2,284,102	2,496,266
Limited to Designated Routes	272,021	531,994	492,616	277,336
Closed to OHV Use	42,953	259,891	19,218	17,485

TABLE S-1 SUMMARY COMPARISON OF LAND USE ALLOCATIONS BY ALTERNATIVE				
LAND USE	Acres ¹			
	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
Recreation and Visitor Services				
SRMA (numbers, acres)	2 69,151	3 83,003	3 83,003	4 83,233
ERMA (number, acres)	0 0	2 38,954	3 68,407	5 110,340
Closed to Discharge of Firearms	10,440	44,770	40,310	37,550
Lands and Realty				
Land Identified for Disposal	213,199	38,273	108,450	186,523
ROW Avoidance Areas	13,222	109,074	422,910	453,000
ROW Exclusion Areas	518,839	919,953	343,060	308,000
Utility Corridors	17,613	149,835	208,891	224,875
Renewable Energy				
Solar Energy Zones (number, acres)	0 0	1 29,964	1 29,964	1 29,964
Exclusion and avoidance ⁴ Solar Wind	532,061 532,061	2,759,149 1,598,929	1,559,146 1,618,659	1,562,616 1,532,657
Minerals				
Segregated from mineral entry	10,976	10,976	10,976	10,976
Oil and Gas				
Existing Leases	52,705	52,705	52,705	52,705
Open with Standard Lease Terms & Conditions	3,655,138	0	0	0
Open – No Surface Occupancy	27,534	856	856	856
Open – Controlled Surface Use	169,710	0	0	0
Open with Lease Notice	239,307	0	0	0
Discretionary Closure	75,020	75,020	75,020	75,020
Non-discretionary Closure ²	258,186	258,186	258,186	258,186
Deferred from New Leasing	-	3,593,047	3,593,047	3,593,047
Geothermal Leasing				
Existing Leases	440	440	440	440
Discretionary Closure ²	75,020	571,930	358,045	75,020
Non-Discretionary Closure ²	258,186	258,186	258,186	258,186
Open with Stipulations or Standard Terms and Conditions	3,194,610	3,154,014	3,222,397	3,630,721

TABLE S-1 SUMMARY COMPARISON OF LAND USE ALLOCATIONS BY ALTERNATIVE				
LAND USE	Acres ¹			
	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
Locatable Minerals				
Open to entry under General Mining Laws ³	4,331,744	3,649,337	3,993,937	4,277,979
Recommended withdrawal under the General Mining Laws	71,488	682,407	337,807	53,765
Mineral (Salable) Materials				
Open Mineral Material Sales ³	3,908,761	3,771,434	3,644,196	3,996,730
Closed Mineral Material	441,239	705,804	456,719	353,270
NOTES:				
¹ Because of overlap with other designations, exclusion of some areas from the particular use, or other reason, total acres for any alternative may not add to the <i>Decision Area</i> Total for either surface or mineral estate.				
² Where WSA acres (non-discretionary closure) and ACEC acres (discretionary closure) overlap, the more restrictive management (WSA-nondiscretionary closure) will prevail.				
³ Includes all subsurface estate regardless of surface ownership				
⁴ In many cases, acres of avoidance and exclusion overlap for both types of renewable energy projects.				